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Army Corps works with local students to promote environmental understanding on World Water Monitoring Day

By Lacey Justinger, Honolulu District Public Affairs

(FORT SHAFTER, HI NR 22-09) The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District, spent two days with local school children at Makiki Stream and Ala Wai Canal to educate and give the students hands-on environmental experience during World Water Monitoring Day, Sept. 10 and 11.

Iwalani Sato with the City and County of Hawaii's Environmental Department coordinated the event, inviting all the presenters, which also included the Hawaii Water Environmental Association of Public Education; Oahu Invasive Species Council; the State of Hawaii's Department of Health, Clean Water Branch; and the City and County of Honolulu's Storm Water Quality Branch.

More than 130 students from Washington Middle School learned about ecosystem restoration, flood risk management, watershed drainage and how to compare water-quality samples and data with the help of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees.

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“Our main emphasis today is water quality sampling, ecosystem restoration and flood risk reduction,” said Mike Wong, from the Corps civil works department. “We all need to do our part to keep it clean.”

Park Rangers Angela Jones and John Mueller from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Pacific Regional Visitors Center helped the students test nitrate and phosphate levels in the water. Students were taught how to use the test materials at Makiki Stream before traveling to Magic Island to test the water samples, compile data and compare results from the two bodies of water.

“Kids need to see that what they do had an effect up and down the stream,” said Anne McKnight, an eighth-grade teacher at Washington Middle School. “We want them to realize that they are active community contributors. This event has a strong impact. It gives them a reason to care; as they can see the direct impact by looking at the water in their system.”

The 12 and 13-year-olds tested the water and served as time keepers and data recorders. They collected and measured the water samples while discussing how pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, turbidity, nitrates and phosphates all relate to each other.

World Water Monitoring Day is an international awareness campaign to promote the public’s understanding about water, conservation and protecting natural resources. Local schools like Washington Middle School use this event to help satisfy eighth-grade earth science standards.

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The City and County of Honolulu, State of Hawaii Department of Health and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have co-sponsored World Water Monitoring Day with Washington Middle School since 2003, said Wong.

America's Clean Water Foundation initiated World Water Monitoring Day in 2002 to celebrate the United States Clean Water Act's 30th Anniversary.

"We also want to invite everyone to participate in the National Public Lands Day at Fort DeRussy on Waikiki Beach on Sept. 26," said Jones. "We want to educate the public on the importance of preserving and improving our precious natural and cultural treasures."

The theme for this year's National Public Lands Day is "Helping Hands for America's Lands." Volunteers will stencil storm drains, remove trash from the Waikiki shoreline and beach berm, and place tree-identification signs in Fort DeRussy.

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Cutlines:

Worldwater1 and 2: Park Ranger Angela Jones, from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Pacific Regional Visitors Center, helps eighth graders from Washington Middle School test nitrate and phosphate levels from Makiki Stream during World Water Monitoring Day, Sept. 11.

Worldwater3: Washington Middle School eighth graders listen to Mike Wong, from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as he explains Ala Wai Canal watershed drainage, ecosystem restoration and flood risk reduction during World Water Monitoring Day, Sept. 11.

